

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-07

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 469

INFO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

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CINCPAC

S E C R E T DACCA 2149

LIMDIS

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: XGDS-3

TAGS: MASS, BG, US

SUBJECT: ARMS FOR BANGLADESH

REF: (A) DACCA 1887; (B) DACCA 2150

1. SUMMARY. AT THE REQUEST OF FOREIGN SECRETARY TABARAK HUSAIN, AMBASSADOR AND POLITICAL COUNSELOR MZA APRIL 26 AT MFA WITH FOREIGN SECRETARY AND CHIEF OF GENERAL STAFF, BRIGADIER M.A. MANZUR. FOREIGN SECRETARY EXPLAINED THAT THEIR PURPOSE WAS TO EXPLORE THE POSSIBILITY OF OBTAINING MILITARY EQUIPMENT UNDER THE TERMS OF THE DEPARTMENT'S APRIL 5 STATEMENT TO THE SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE, WHICH HAD BEEN CONVEYED TO FOREIGN SECRETARY APRIL 13, BUT IT QUICKLY BECAME CLEAR THAT BDG AIM IS RATHER TO EXPAND THOSE TERMS TO MEET WHAT ARE SEEN HERE AS URGENT CONSIDERATIONS REQUIRING SPECIAL HELP FOR BANGLADESH. AMBASSADOR, WHILE AGREEING TO REPORT THEIR CONCERNS AND REQUESTS, DISCOURAGED THEM FROM THINKING THAT MORE

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WOULD BE POSSIBLE THAN WAS SUGGESTED BY THE APRIL 5

STATEMENT. END SUMMARY.

2. AFTER FOREIGN SECRETARY'S INTRODUCTION IN WHICH HE ELABORATED ON THE IDEA THAT DEVELOPMENTAL EFFORTS AND EXPENDITURES WILL BE WASTED UNLESS INTERNAL SECURITY IS INSURED, REFERRING INTER ALIA TO U.S. GENEROUS HELP TO BANGLADESH IN PAST AND TO BETTER RELATIONSHIP WITH PRESENT BANGLADESH GOVERNMENT, BRIGADIER MANZUR ASSUMED THE ROLE OF SPOKESMAN. HE SAID THAT THE STRENGTHENING OF INTERNAL SECURITY IS IMPERATIVE IF BANGLADESH IS TO AVOID EXTERNAL AGGRESSION, I.E., INTERVENTION BY INDIA. MANZUR SAID THAT BDG'S CURRENT INTELLIGENCE INDICATES THAT WITH ONSET OF MONSOONAL RAINS, "MISCREANTS" SUPPORTED BY INDIA WILL BECOME MORE ACTIVE. THEY WILL SEEK TO CAPITALIZE ON PRESENT PAUCITY OF TRANSPORTATION AND COMMUNICATIONS AVAILABLE TO BDG'S SECURITY FORCES. INCIDENTS WILL BE TRIGGERED IN VARIOUS OUTLYING POINTS, AND THE RESULT WILL BE A DISPERSAL OF FORCES WHICH CANNOT BE QUICKLY MOVED AGAIN AS THE NEED ARISES AND WITH WHICH IT WILL BE EXTREMELY DIFFICULT TO MAINTAIN ADEQUATE CONTACT. IN THIS SITUATION, THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE TROOPS -- ALREADY LOW BECAUSE OF INADEQUATE AND DISPARATE ARMS -- WILL BE REDUCED AND, AS A RESULT, THE LOYALTY OF THE POPULACE TO THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT WILL BEGIN TO WANE AS IT IS SHOWN THAT DACCA CAN OFFER NO PROTECTION. IN THIS DETERIORATING SITUATION, MANZUR SAID, INDIA WOULD BE ABLE TO JUSTIFY OVERT INTERVENTION.

3. MANZUR SAID THEY HOPED WE WOULD RECONSIDER OUR POSITION AND PERMIT BDG TO OBTAIN SMALL ARMS (HE SAID CALIBER .50 MACHINE GUNS AND 81 MM MORTAR WOULD BE THE LARGEST ITEMS THAT MIGHT BE SOUGHT) BUT ADDED THAT COMMUNICATIONS AND TRANSPORT EQUIPMENT ARE THE MOST PRESSING NEED. WHEN AMBASSADOR ASKED IF HE HOPED TO OBTAIN THESE ITEMS BEFORE MONSOON RAINS BEGIN IN JUNE, MANZUR SAID THIS WAS CENTRAL PROBLEM FOR BANGLADESH, NOTING THAT EVEN THOUGH THEY REQUIRED ONLY A LIMITED VARIETY OF EQUIPMENT, THE NEED WAS URGENT. THE ITEMS COULD NOT BE OBTAINED OFF-THE-SHELF, AND NORMAL COMMERCIAL PURCHASES INVOLVED AN EXTENDED LEADTIME. THEREFORE BDG NEEDED ACTIVE USG INTERVENTION

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WITH MANUFACTURERS, MANZUR SAID, TO DIVERT LONG LEADTIME ITEMS TO BANGLADESH. WHEN AMBASSADOR POINTED OUT THAT JUNE IS ONLY FIVE WEEKS AWAY, MANZUR SAID IT WOULD BE HELPFUL IF BANGLADESH KNEW WHAT THE ITEMS WERE IN THE PIPELINE.

4. AMBASSADOR ASKED IF THEY WERE THINKING STRICTLY IN TERMS OF COMMERCIAL SALES, DRAWING ATTENTION TO

LANGUAGE OF APRIL 5 STATEMENT. MANZUR SAID BDG WOULD INEVITABLY NEED A MEASURE OF CREDIT AND ASKED HOW IT MIGHT BE OBTAINED. AMBASSADOR DEMURRED, POINTING TO LANGUAGE OF STATEMENT.

5. WHEN MANZUR ASKED FOR AMBASSADOR'S OVERALL REACTION, AMBASSADOR REPLIED THAT HE HAD THOUGHT RESULT OF HIS EARLIER DISCUSSION WITH FOREIGN SECRETARY WOULD BE THAT BDG WOULD DECIDE WHAT SPECIFICALLY IT WANTED TO BUY AND WOULD PURSUE SUCH PURCHASES THROUGH THEIR WASHINGTON EMBASSY IN COMMERCIAL CHANNELS. AMBASSADOR SAID HE HAD NOT READ OUR APRIL 5 STATEMENT AS INTENDED TO ENCOURAGE BANGLADESH TO SEEK MILITARY EQUIPMENT IN U.S. -- INDEED ITS OVERALL THRUST WAS RATHER NEGATIVE -- BUT IT DID INDICATE OUR WILLINGNESS TO CONSIDER LICENSE REQUESTS FOR CERTAIN EQUIPMENT WHICH COULD BE USED FOR INTERNAL SECURITY. AMBASSADOR ADDED THAT HE DID NOT SEE STATEMENT AS OFFERING TO ESTABLISH ANY GOVERNMENT-TO-GOVERNMENT RELATIONSHIP BUT RATHER LIMITING THE QUESTION TO THE CONSIDERATION OF LICENSES FOR COMMERCIAL SALES IN SUCH AREAS AS TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS.

6. MANZUR REPEATED THAT, GIVEN BANGLADESH'S DESPERATE NEED, IT COULD NOT RELY EXCLUSIVELY ON USE OF COMMERCIAL CHANNELS WHICH WERE MUCH TOO SLOW. AFTER PRESENTING LISTS OF DESIRED EQUIPMENT (WHICH FOLLOW IN REF B) AS ILLUSTRATIVE OF BDG'S NEEDS, HUSAIN AND MANZUR CONCLUDED THAT BDG MUST FIND A WAY TO GET ITS PRIORITY ITEMS ON A PRIORITY BASIS, WHETHER THROUGH USG ASSISTANCE IN FACILITATING MANUFACTURERS' DELIVERIES OR MAKING ITEMS AVAILABLE FROM ITS OWN INVENTORIES. BOTH STRESSED AGAIN THE NEED FOR HELP IN GETTING CREDIT, NOTING FINANCIAL BURDEN THAT WOULD BE PLACED ON BANGLADESH'S SLENDER
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RESOURCES.

7. AMBASSADOR SAID HE WOULD REPORT THESE REQUESTS TO WASHINGTON BUT HE DID NOT THINK THAT BDG SHOULD DELAY ANY ACTION IT FELT NECESSARY IN THIS FIELD IN THE HOPE OF A FAVORABLE RESPONSE. THE RESTRICTIVE CHARACTER OF OUR APRIL 5 STATEMENT, HE EMPHASIZED AGAIN, SEEMED QUITE CLEAR. HE SAID HE CONTINUED TO BELIEVE THAT BDG SHOULD CONSIDER -- IF IT WANTED SPECIFIC ITEMS FROM U.S. -- PROCEEDING ON A CASE-BY-CASE BASIS WITH COMMERCIAL SUPPLIERS.

8. ACTION REQUESTED. THE DEPARTMENT'S EARLY INSTRUCTIONS ARE REQUESTED. WE ASSUME THAT ANY USG ROLE REGARDING CREDIT IS OUT OF QUESTION. BUT THIS LEAVES QUESTION

WHETHER THERE IS ANY LATITUDE IN DEFENSE DEPARTMENT
PRACTICES FOR HELPING EXPEDITE DELIVERY OF NON-CONTROVERSIAL
ITEMS WHICH MIGHT BE APPROVED FOR LICENSE. WHILE WE ARE IN
ENTIRE AGREEMENT WITH SENSE OF CURRENT POLICY WHICH STRICTLY
LIMITS OUR INVOLVEMENT WITH BDG IN ARMS SUPPLY, WE WOULD
WELCOME CHANCE TO BE HELPFUL IN THOSE AREAS WHERE WE CAN.
BOSTER

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